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### **USDA Celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month**

WASHINGTON, DC – On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of Agriculture kicked off Hispanic Heritage Month by hosting an event with inviting top ranking Hispanic Leaders.

Undersecretary Ed Avalos, Marketing and Regulatory Programs and highest ranking Hispanic at USDA, opened the event with a well received welcome highlighting noted contribution of Hispanics to American agriculture. Hard work will pay off at USDA,” said Undersecretary Avalos, , describing the value the Hispanic culture places on dedication and commitment.

Dr. Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, commented on the significance of continuing to promote higher education among the Hispanic community.

“For me it’s clear that education is the key to success...in any language, in every culture. I am so proud to be working for this administration...to revitalize and move forward America’s education agenda for both the Latino community and for the nation as a whole,” said Dr. Melendez.

Dr. Elisabeth Hagen, Under Secretary for Food Safety, stressed the key role Hispanics play in the success of the USDA.

“Hispanics share in our long and proud tradition of excellence in food, agriculture, and rural development. They’re a vital part of the workforce that this Department must reflect in order to serve a country that is immensely diverse,” said Dr. Hagen.

Dr. Hagen echoed Undersecretary’s comments by saying, “The fact that so many Hispanics are out here as professionals at USDA is a testament that Hispanics in America place rewards on hard work.”

At the close of the ceremony, The Maru Montero Dance Company performed traditional Mexican Folk dance.

Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16<sup>th</sup> and Chile on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

To watch the complete ceremony, please visit [mms://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/dm/0916b.wmv](https://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/dm/0916b.wmv).

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